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AMEMBASSY RIYADH
AMCONSUL JEDDAH
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 006573

FROM EMBASSY KHARTOUM OFFICE
LONDON FOR YOUNG, PARIS FOR MORAN, BRUSSELS FOR JOHNSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/14/06

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SUBJECT: SUDAN: FOREIGN MINISTER ON CIVIL WAR, TERRORISM

11. CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR TO SUDAN TIMOTHY CARNEY.
REASON 1.5(D).

12. (S) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. THE SUDANESE FOREIGN MINISTER REAFFIRMED TO ME MAY 10 THAT KHARTOUM HAS MADE A DECISION THAT TERRORIST GROUPS MUST GO AND IS WORKING TO COMPILE MEMBERSHIP LISTS. HE BELIEVES RENEGADE SAUDI TERROR FINANCIER USAMA BIN LADEN NEEDS TO START TALKING TO WESTERN DIPLOMATS. I REBUFFED HIS ATTEMPT TO INVOLVE THE U.S. IN RESTORING SUDAN'S RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA AND UGANDA.

13. (C) THE MINISTER ASKED THAT THE U.S. CONVEY TO THE SUDANESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT (SPLM) LEADER THAT KHARTOUM IS OPEN TO SPLM IDEAS TO SOLVE THE CIVIL WAR; THAT THE GOS IS PROCEEDING WITH NO HIDDEN AGENDA, AND IS OPEN TO VENUE AND PLAYERS TO GET TALKS STARTED. MY REPLY WAS THAT KHARTOUM MUST MAKE CONCRETE GESTURES TO BUILD TRUST AND I SUGGESTED SOME WHICH MIGHT BE TIMED TO THE 20 MAY UNESCO/UNDP MEET ON SUDANESE HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS IN THE NETHERLANDS..

14. (C) THE GOS IS ONLY SLOWLY PROCEEDING TO ACT ON THEIR HIGH-LEVEL STATEMENTS OF INTENT TO ANSWER U.S. CONCERNS ON SUDANESE HAVEN AND SUPPORT FOR TERRORISM. I SUGGESTED THEY HAVE A WINDOW OF 45-90 DAYS TO PROVE GOOD FAITH, NOW THAT THEIR NEW CABINET IS IN PLACE. THE KHARTOUM EFFORT TO START PEACE TALKS WITH THE SOUTH LOOKS SERIOUS. UNSCR 1054 HAS GOTTEN ATTENTION THROUGHOUT THE SUDANESE CAPITAL. BUT, IF THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S COMMENTS REFLECT THE REALITY, KHARTOUM DOES NOT/NOT GRASP HOW COMPLETELY IT IS UP TO THEM TO CUT A DEAL WITH THE ETHIOPIANS IF SUDAN HAS, AS SEEMS LIKELY, SPIRITED THE THREE MUBARAK PLOT TERRORISTS OUT OF SUDAN. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT

CIVIL WAR

15. (C) FOREIGN MINISTER ALI OSMAN MOHAMMED TAHA MET ME AFTER PRAYERS ON RETURNING FROM THE HAJ VIA MALAYSIA FRIDAY, 10 MAY, TO TALK ABOUT PEACE EFFORTS WITH THE SOUTH AND, ON DISMISSING NOTETAKERS, TO MAKE POINTS ON THE GOS EFFORTS TO RESPOND TO AMERICAN CONCERNS ON TERRORISM (SEPTEL-NOTAL). AFTER ASSURING HIMSELF THAT I RECEIVED HIS FAX REPLY TO MY LETTER DETAILING SPLM REACTION TO THE FIRST MESSAGE FROM KHARTOUM (NAIROBI 4836-NOTAL), TAHA SAID THAT KHARTOUM IS COMMITTED TO

DEMONSTRATING ITS SINCERITY IN REACHING A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. HE SAW SCOPE IN SOME SPLM REMARKS IN THE WAKE OF THE 10 APRIL "PEACE CHARTER," SIGNED WITH THE SPLINTER SOUTH SUDAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT (SSIM), TO INDUCE THE MAJOR INSURGENT MOVEMENT TO JOIN IN. HE SAID THAT THE KEY ISSUES ARE IN THE 10 APRIL ACCORD, WHICH AIMED TO CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE TO GET SERIOUS TALKS STARTED. HE WAS ASTONISHED WHEN I SAID THAT ALL SOUTHERN INTERLOCUTORS EXCEPT LAWYER AND FORMER SUDANESE VICE-PRESIDENT ABEL ALIER HAD VIEWED THE PEACE CHARTER AS A "TAKE-IT-OR LEAVE IT" DOCUMENT. A LAWYER HIMSELF, TAHA AGREED WITH THE CHARACTERIZATION OF HIS CHIEF OF PROTOCOL WHO HAD EARLIER DESCRIBED THE EFFORT AS ONE OF "IGNITION."

16. (C) I RECALLED THE MINISTER'S OWN RECOGNITION OF THE MISTRUST AND SUSPICION THAT CAUSED TAHA TO SEEK INTERMEDIARIES TO GET A PEACE PROCESS STARTED. THE GOS NEEDS TO BUILD TRUST AND A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE MEASURES APART FROM THE EARLIER SUGGESTION OF A PRISONER EXCHANGE MIGHT BE CONSIDERED. SUCH STEPS DIVIDE IN TWO CATEGORIES, THOSE DIRECTLY IMPACTING SPLM CIVILIAN AND MILITARY FIGURES; AND THOSE WHICH AFFECT POPULATIONS IN THE SPLM-CONTROLLED AREAS AND ALSO IMPACT IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. NOTING THAT BRAINSTORMING WITH THE PAO HAD ADDED ELEMENTS, I CITED NOTIONS OF:

- KHARTOUM MEDIA ACCESS FOR SPLM/A LEADER GARANG TO MAKE HIS CASE;
- OFFERING SUDANESE PASSPORTS TO MAJOR SPLM FIGURES IN NAIROBI, CAIRO, LONDON;
- A PUBLIC STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT BASHIR RECOGNIZING THE DAMAGE DONE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTH, BY THE CIVIL WAR AND THAT SOUTHERN GRIEVANCES ARE REAL AND MUST BE SATISFIED.

THE SECOND CATEGORY MAINLY FOCUSES ON RELIEF EFFORTS BY THE UN OPERATION LIFELINE SUDAN (UN/OLS). KHARTOUM COULD:

- LIFT PROHIBITIONS ON FLIGHT TO 16 DESTINATIONS BY OLS AND TO 12 DESTINATIONS BY ICRC;
- PERMIT OPERATION OVER SUDAN OF THE BELGIAN AIR FORCE-PROVIDED C-130, PROHIBITED FROM SUDANESE AIRSPACE SINCE MID-1995;
- OPEN THE CONTROVERSIAL NUBA MOUNTAIN AREA TO OLS OPERATIONS, STARTING WITH AN ASSESSMENT MISSION AS EARLY AS THE END OF MAY;
- CREATE, SUBJECT TO DISCUSSION WITH THE UN, A MIXED GOS/SSIM/SPLA SECURITY ELEMENT FOR UN BARGE CONVOYS TO PREVENT ANY LOOTING AS WELL AS TO ENSURE ONLY FOOD AND RELIEF ITEMS ARE DELIVERED TO DESTINATIONS ALONG THE NILE.

TAHA TOOK THE AMBASSADOR'S LIST OF POSSIBLE GESTURES, SAYING THAT HE WOULD LOOK AT THE IDEAS WITH MILITARY AND SECURITY STAFF, BUT SOME SEEM IMMEDIATELY ACCEPTABLE.

17. (C) CONCLUDING THIS ASPECT OF THE DISCUSSION, THE MINISTER ASKED THAT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE BE CONVEYED TO THE SPLM. ANY SPLM IDEAS ON PEACE ARE WELCOME. THE SPLA MUST BE PART OF ANY PROCESS FOR COMPREHENSIVE PEACE. THE GOS HAS NO/HIDDEN AGENDA AND IS NOT/NOT TRYING TO PLAY INSURGENT FACTIONS OFF AGAINST EACH OTHER. TAHA BELIEVES THAT IF GARANG COMES IN, PEACE WILL MATERIALIZE. THE GOS IS OPEN TO VENUE FOR TALKS AND TO WHO WOULD BE PLAYERS IN ANY TALKS. I SAID I HAD ASKED THE SPLM TO ARRANGE A MEETING WITH GARANG ON MY RETURN TO NAIROBI AND WOULD CONVEY TAHA'S MESSAGE, STRESSING THAT KHARTOUM SHOULD MAKE GESTURES SOON, PERHAPS TIMING SOME TO THE OPENING OF THE 20 MAY NETHERLANDS CONFERENCE ON HUMANITARIAN MATTERS WHICH IS A FOLLOW-ON TO LAST SEPTEMBER'S BARCELONA GATHERING UNDER THE UNESCO "CULTURE OF PEACE" RUBRIC.

POLICY ON TERRORISM

18. (C) TAHA DISMISSED NOTETAKERS TO TALK ABOUT THE PROCESS HE INITIATED DURING A 6 FEBRUARY MEETING WITH THEN AF/E DIRECTOR SHINN AND MYSELF JUST BEFORE THE U.S. DIPLOMATIC STAFF WITHDREW OFFSHORE. I TOLD HIM WASHINGTON CONTINUES SKEPTICAL, ALL THE MORE SO GIVEN THE FAILURE OF KHARTOUM TO TAKE VERIFIABLE STEPS ON THE ISSUE OF ITS HAVEN AND SUPPORT TO TERRORISTS. CITING THE PRESIDENT'S 30 APRIL CREDENTIALS PRESENTATION REMARKS TO THE NEW SUDANESE AMBASSADOR, I UNDERSCORED THAT ACTIONS ARE NOW MORE IMPORTANT THAN DIALOGUE, SAYING THAT A 45-90 DAY WINDOW IN TIME IS NOW OPEN WITHIN WHICH THE GOS CAN DEMONSTRATE THAT ITS INTENTIONS ARE REAL.

19. (S) TAHA REPLIED THAT A DECISION TO FORCE (TERRORIST) ORGANIZATIONS TO GO IS IN PROCESS. HE REFERRED TO SPECIFICS CONCERNING EGYPTIAN TERRORISTS, SEEMING TO CONFIRM DIPLOMATIC SOURCES WHO TOLD ME THAT A LIST OF 39 EGYPTIANS HAVE GONE AT SUDANESE REQUEST. I STRESSED THE NEED TO VERIFY SUCH MATTERS WITH INFORMATION ON PASSPORTS AND DESTINATIONS.

110. (C) IN DISCUSSING SPECIFICS, TAHA RAISED THE CASE OF RENEGADE SAUDI FINANCIER USAMA BIN LADEN. AN MFA CONTACT HAD EARLIER TOLD ME THAT THE MFA WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN GETTING BIN LADEN TO ACCEPT A TIME MAGAZINE INTERVIEW (PUBLISHED IN THE 6 MAY EDITION). TAHA MUSED ABOUT GETTING THE VARIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TO ENTER INTO CONTACTS WITH THE WEST AS PART OF BRINGING THEM TO SEE MATTERS IN A DIFFERENT WAY. HE RECALLED THE CASE OF THE FOUNDER OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD WHO HAD ENTERED INTO CONTACT WITH A BRITISH GOVERNMENT ARABIST IN EGYPT IN THE 1940S. NASSER HAD CITED THE CONTACT TO DISCREDIT THE BROTHERHOOD IN HIS 1954 CONFLICT WITH THE ORGANIZATION, TAHA SAID, NOTING THAT THE HISTORY ECHOES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ISLAMIST ORGANIZATIONS TO THIS DAY. HE MOOTED PUTTING USAMA BIN LADEN IN CONTACT WITH WESTERN EMBASSIES. COMMENT: WHILE I TOSSED MY BRITISH COLLEAGUE, A FINE ARABIST, OUT OF THE TROIKA, I BELIEVE WE WOULD DO BETTER TO WORK ON GETTING BIN LADEN INTO SAUDI HANDS THAN COUNTING ON HIM TO CHANGE HIS STRIPES THROUGH DIALOGUE WITH WESTERNERS. END COMMENT

REGION AND THE UNSCR

111. (C) CLEARLY UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE INCREASINGLY VOCIFEROUS NEW PARLIAMENT, TAHA BEGAN MORE OR LESS THINKING OUT LOUD ON HOW TO DEAL WITH UNSCR 1054 AND THE POOR STATE OF RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORS ETHIOPIA AND UGANDA. HE ARGUED THAT NOW IS NOT THE MOMENT FOR SUDAN TO DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THEM AS SUCH AN EFFORT WAS UNLIKELY TO BE WELL-RECEIVED. HE ASKED IF THE U.S. COULD SOUND OUT POSSIBILITIES. I REBUFFED THE NOTION, TELLING TAHA THAT SUDAN HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SO, AND THAT THE CIRCUMSTANCES, NOTABLY THE TERRORISM DIMENSION, MEAN THAT KHARTOUM MUST WORK DIRECTLY WITH ADDIS, PRIMARILY, ALL THE MORE SO AS IT APPEARS GAMES HAVE BEEN PLAYED WITH THE THREE SUSPECTS, NOW SEEMINGLY OUT OF SUDAN.

ASMARA MINIMIZE CONSIDERED

BRAZEAL